Australian Bureau of Statistics

2001 census

JULY 2004 issue 33

www.abs.gov.au/census

census update

Testing the Census

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Now Available

Measures of Australia's Progress

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ISSN 1320–2758

census corner

The eCensus

The eCensus Team is responsible for the development and implementation of the electronic Census form, planned for use in the 2006 Census. The team was formed in June 2003.

The eCensus project combines the usual issues associated with the sheer scale of the census, with Internet issues such as security and useability, and the significant challenge of integrating the eCensus with the traditional collection and processing of data on paper forms.

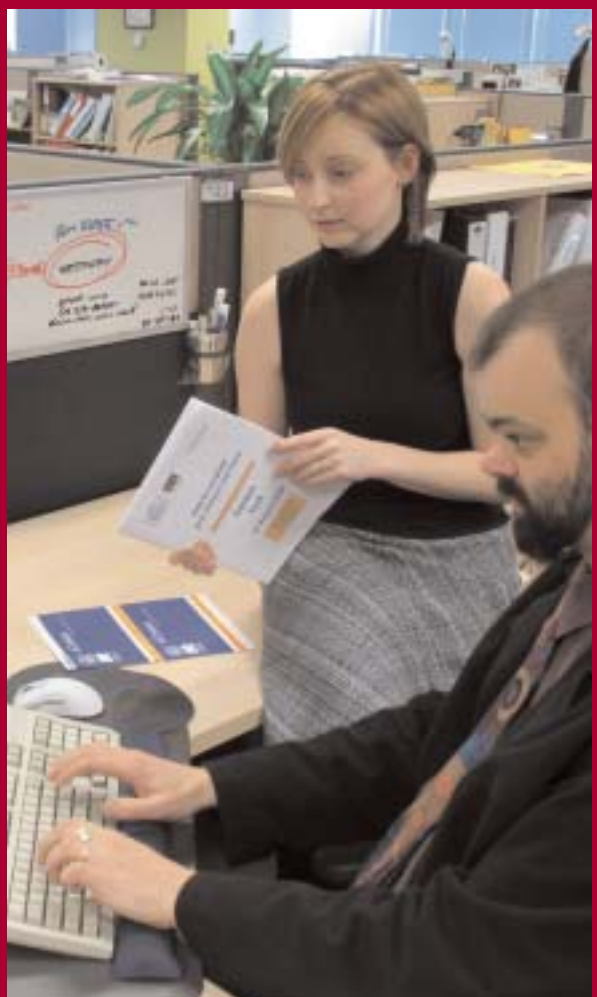
The team is currently involved in preparation for the Major Test, to be held in August this year. Some of the aims of the Test are integrating eCensus procedures into existing field procedures and systems, proofing and testing of the eCensus form and system, and creation of promotional documentation for the purpose of educating the public about the eCensus. The eCensus form to be used in this test has been developed in-house.

The other major focus for the team is to conduct a tender process to find an industry partner to develop the 2006 eCensus system. The chosen vendor will provide a solution for use in the Dress Rehearsal, and with refinement, for the census in 2006.

The Major Test will allow further development of the eCensus form, which will form the basis of the 2006 application, as well as adding to the teams understanding of data collection via the Internet. The Major Test will also facilitate a more accurate estimation of the eCensus take up rate to be expected for the 2006 Census, and allow information to be gathered on the operating systems and web browsers used by respondents. A better understanding of these elements will assist in the development of a suitable eCensus system for 2006.

A recent focus for the team was the challenge of making the eCensus access codes available in a format accessible to the visually impaired. The eCensus team undertook consultation with peak disability bodies such as Vision Australia and the Royal Blind Society, who worked in conjunction with the ABS to assist in the development of a strategy for assisting the visually impaired to complete an online census form. The resulting strategy includes the production of eCensus Braille cards and Large Print Format, which will be used to deliver the eCensus access codes to visually impaired respondents, on request. Visually impaired respondents may also request to be given their access codes verbally. This solution will be tested in the Major Test, with analysis focussing on the level of demand for alternate formats, as well as requests for additional formats. The conclusions of this analysis will determine the strategy accommodating the visually impaired used in the 2006 Census.

The eCensus team recognise that the eCensus project will be a high-profile representation of the ABS, and are committed to producing a high quality Internet solution that upholds the favourable reputation of the census program and the ABS.



Team members Tenille Johnson and Peter Clark are currently involved in preparation for the Major Test, to be held in August this year

Major Test

Selected parts of Melbourne were chosen for the test to evaluate procedures for secure apartment buildings.

A test of census form design, content and procedures is about to take place in 20,000 households in Victoria. Selected suburbs in Melbourne along with the township of Beechworth and its surrounding areas were chosen for the test because these areas contain the sorts of dwellings that will allow the ABS to test new and improved procedures.

Procedures differ between urban and rural areas, and testing must include both types of communities to effectively test all census procedures.

In urban areas, secure apartment buildings pose some access problems for collectors to drop off and collect census forms. This test will enable the ABS to evaluate the success of new procedures for secure apartment buildings, in particular the procedures for mailback or eCensus return. This is aimed at minimising the need for a collector to have to return to secure apartment buildings to pick up forms, and at the same time test the eCensus technology.

Caravan parks are another type of dwelling that have given collectors some challenges in the past, and the ABS is now looking at procedures to help improve the quality of data that is collected from caravan park residents.

The ABS is also using this test to evaluate the content of the census forms. New questions on Unpaid Work, Children Ever Born and Need for Assistance are being evaluated, as well as improvements to the design and wording of existing questions.

In the lead up to each census a series of tests are held – each of increasing size. The Census of Population and Housing is the largest and most complex peacetime operation in Australia, and these practice runs put ABS systems, software and people to the test and allow improvements to be made before the main event.

Testing the Census

test	location	date	households
Skirmish	Canberra	Mar 2002	1,000
Minor Test	Sydney	Oct 2002	2,000
Minor Test	Brisbane	Aug 2003	6,000
Major Test	Melbourne/Beechworth	Aug 2004	20,000
Dress Rehearsal	TBA	Aug 2005	40,000
The Main Event		Aug 2006	10,000,000

The Census in Remote Indigenous Communities

In many communities, local people are recruited as Collector Interviewers.

The census aims to count all people in Australia on census night and this includes people living in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Because of the unique cultural aspects of Indigenous society, the ABS has developed different census procedures and also uses special forms in these remote communities to ensure that the most accurate count possible is achieved for the Census.

In the lead up to the census, the Census Management Unit in each state and territory identifies the discrete communities where these different forms and procedures should be used. This decision is usually based on which communities have particular cultural differences or literacy and language difficulties which would make the use of the normal census forms impractical.

In these nominated discrete communities local people are recruited to be Collector Interviewers. Instead of the members of the community completing their own census form, the interviewers undertake interviews with the other members of the community and record the information on the Special Indigenous Forms. These forms are specially designed so that they can be used by interviewers and are also able to cater for the larger household sizes that are common in Indigenous communities. The same topics are covered on the Special Indigenous Forms as on the normal census form.

The special strategies used in remote communities also include special public relations and media activities, such as paid media advertising, a program of contact with community leaders, briefings for representatives of Indigenous media outlets and the use of posters and leaflets specifically designed for Indigenous communities.

In the lead up to the 2006 Census, representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and users of Indigenous census data have been consulted about the special procedures and forms used in remote communities. Following their input, a different form design is being tested and changes to procedures are also being trialled and evaluated. This testing is a vital part of ensuring that the procedures and forms used in remote communities, during the census, are continually improved and remain as effective as possible.

User Consultation

The Australian Bureau of Statistics is about to commence an extensive user consultation process as part of the development of the 2006 Census Output Program. The ABS is aiming to inform census users of the proposed broad strategies for the development and dissemination of 2006 products and services, and to seek users' views on them.

Based on the results of this consultation, the ABS will develop specific proposals for the 2006 Census Output Program, including the development of prototypes of 2006 products and services. It is planned that details of these prototypes will be circulated for comment in mid 2005.

Two publications will be produced to inform users about ABS views on the 2006 Census Output Program.

- ABS Views on Census Output Strategy (cat. no. 2009.0)

  Scheduled for release on 28 September 2004, this publication is an overview of the proposed strategic directions for 2006 Census products and services. It will provide information about the proposed pricing strategies, types of products, confidentiality and randomisation procedures, and major changes to concepts and classifications. It will also include a tentative release schedule.

  A questionnaire will be distributed with ABS Views on Census Output Strategy to allow users to contribute their views, comments and ideas regarding the strategies and proposals outlined in the paper.

- ABS Views on Census Products and Services (cat. no. 2011.0)

  This publication will provide more information about the full range of products and services that are proposed for the 2006 Census Output Program. Based on the feedback from ABS Views on Census Output Strategy, it will provide examples of products, indicative release dates and prices.

  A questionnaire will also be distributed with this publication to seek feedback on the design, content and functionality of 2006 Census Products and Services.

The user consultation process will be a significant factor in the development of the 2006 Census Output Program. It is extremely important in ensuring that census products are relevant and responsive to the needs of users.

The user consultation process will be a significant factor in the development of the 2006 Census product range

Did you know?

For the 2001 Census, Australia was divided into 37,209 Collection Districts, each containing approximately 200–250 households.

ASGC – Towards 2006

Census data is available for a wide range of geographic areas ranging from the whole of Australia through to a Collection District of a few hundred households.

The basic framework for dividing Australia into relevant geographic areas is provided in the Australian Standard Geographical Classifcation (ASGC), a hierarchical classification with a number of different types of areas to satisfy different statistical purposes. The ASGC facilitates the standardisation of terminology and the comparability of data across collections.

The more well known geographical areas of the ASGC include the Local Government Area (LGA), the Statistical Local Area (SLA) and the Collection District (CD).

LGAs are legally designated areas administered by local council bodies, and are proclaimed by the state and territory governments. LGA boundaries are used as the basis for defining SLAs, so that each LGA is made up of one or more SLAs. SLAs therefore cannot cross LGA boundaries.

CDs are the smallest geographical unit in the ASGC, and are defined every 5 years for the Census of Population and Housing. They outline the area a single collector can cover, dropping off and collecting Census forms. CDs do not cross SLA (or consequently LGA) boundaries, and are used as the building block for all ASGC structures at the time of a census.

The process of ensuring that the geographical classification continues to be relevant takes a considerable amount of effort. The ABS monitors changes to the geographies of each state and territory to identify issues which may affect the ASGC, such as council amalgamations, re-distributions, or the gazettal of new suburbs.

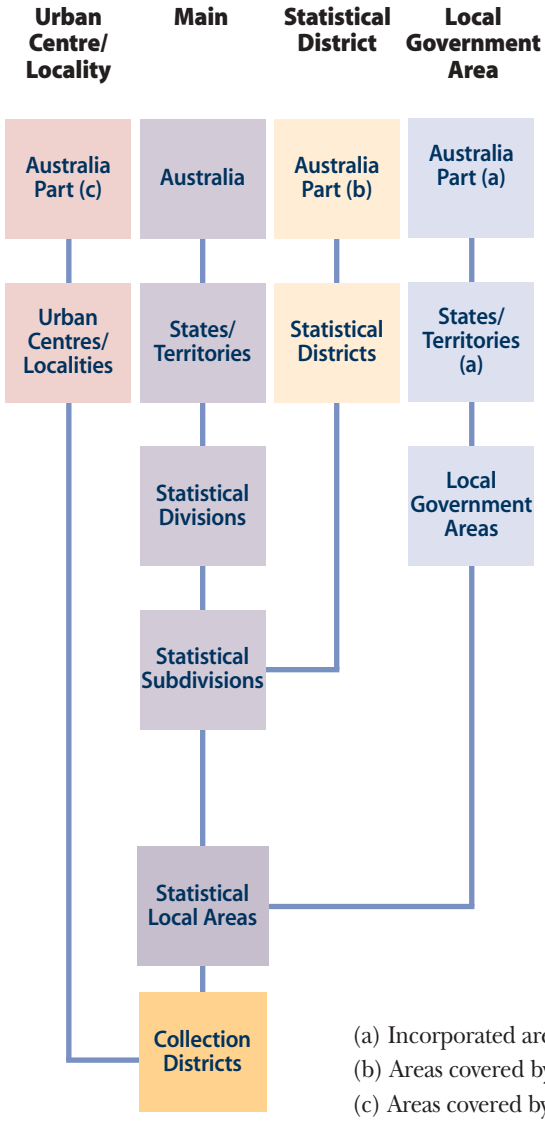
Preparation is already underway for the 2006 edition of the ASGC which will be used for the 2006 Census. The 2006 CD design process is influenced by many factors, including population growth in a particular area, feedback provided by collectors from the 2001 Census, and changes to the boundaries of LGAs in the years between censuses.

The effective date for each edition of ASGC is 1 July of that year and includes changes to LGA boundaries made since the previous edition. However, changes gazetted too close to the effective date of 1 July may be held over until the next edition.

To ensure that census data is available for LGAs as they are defined on Census night in August 2006, it is important that any planned changes are gazetted earlier rather than later.

For more information, consult the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) (cat. no. 1216.0).

The 2001 ASGC Structure



(a) Incorporated areas only
(b) Areas covered by S Dist only
(c) Areas covered by UC/L only

Mesh Blocks

The ABS is currently developing a new geographical unit known as Mesh Blocks that will be four to five times smaller than a Collection District. It is planned that Mesh Blocks will become the basic building block for all statistical, political and administrative regions in Australia.

Currently there are a wide range of geographic units in use in Australia. Many organisations adopt their own geographical units to suit their needs, often without reference to units that are used by others. As a result, data cannot be readily integrated and exchanged between organisations. Incompatible geographical units have hampered the use of statistics and the development of Mesh Blocks will help address this problem.

If statistics are to be compared across collections, across subject matter, and across organisations, then the geographic areas to which the statistics refer must be comparable.

Some regions, such as Electoral Divisions, Postcodes and Suburbs are currently approximated by grouping Collection Districts (CDs) together on a 'best fit' basis. CD derived boundaries, and therefore the full range of 2001 Census data, are available for all these regions. During the CD design process prior to the last census, there was a considerable effort made to align CD boundaries to gazetted suburb boundaries, so generally CD derived suburbs are a very close approximation of official suburbs.

However, the primary role of CDs is census collection and restraints placed upon their boundaries by collection requirements mean that they do not align closely with river catchments, the boundaries of small rural localities, or many administrative regions. CDs must have a physical boundary visible to the collector on the ground, and many natural and administrative boundaries are aligned to less obvious features in the environment or to property boundaries.

While the Collection District will always need to cater for collection requirements, it is now possible to develop a new micro level spatial unit that is not constrained by the functional requirements of census collection. Importantly, data will be coded to Mesh Blocks independent of the census collection methodology, so there will be no need for Mesh Blocks to fit within existing Collection District boundaries.

Mesh Blocks will be so small that they will be able to aggregate reasonably accurately to any geographical region. This will result in more accurate demographic analysis, which in turn will lead to improved government policy formulation and service delivery. The ability to more easily integrate data from different sources will also decrease duplication between organisations.

The Mesh Block concept is only now feasible due to advances in GIS technology and improved access to digital topographic data. In particular, the recent development of the Geocoded National Address File (G-NAF) by PSMA Australia now enables the efficient coding of address information to small geographic units.

It is estimated that Australia would be divided into around 200,000 Mesh Blocks, compared to the 37,209 CDs that are currently the smallest spatial unit. The ABS aims to have Mesh Blocks designed and built in time for the dissemination of data for the 2006 Census. However to meet the planning time frames and risk management procedures of the census, draft Mesh Blocks must be finalised in time for the census Dress Rehearsal in May 2005.

Mesh Blocks will only be introduced with stringent measures to ensure that confidentiality is maintained. The ABS is strongly committed to maintaining confidentiality, and has a legal requirement under the Census and Statistics Act 1905 to ensure that no information is released that may identify an individual. Only a very limited amount of census data will be published for individual Mesh Blocks.

For more information, consult Information Paper: Mesh Blocks (cat. no. 1209.0).

2011 and beyond

For the 2011 Census, Collection Districts will no longer be an output unit. Instead, they will only be used for the collection phase of the census. For data output, it is proposed that the CD be replaced by a new spatial unit of around the same size that will be specifically designed for output purposes. There will be an extensive user consultation process before any of these changes are implemented.

Census Maps

Two sets of reference maps were produced for the 2001 Census. They may assist users identify relevant features and areas, and to get more out of their census data. These maps display 2001 Census Collection Districts (CDs) and Statistical Local Areas (SLAs).

Collection District Maps

These are the same maps as those used by Census Collectors during the collection phase of the 2001 Census. Each Collection District Map shows the boundaries of a single CD. In addition to the boundary of the CD, these full colour maps show roads, rivers, railways, powerlines and cadastral (land parcel) boundaries. These features give the CD context and show how its boundaries have been defined. Some boundary detail for surrounding Statistical Local Areas and CDs is also included.

The entire set of SLA Maps is available on CD-ROM, in *Statistical Local Area Maps, ASGC 2001 Edition* (cat. no. 2920.0.30.001)

If you are a regular user of CDATA 2001, have you considered upgrading to Detailed Base Map?

The standard CDATA 2001 package contains Standard Base Map Data. Detailed Base Map data adds greatly to the value of CDATA 2001 and allows much more detailed and meaningful analysis by mapping airports, railway stations, schools, churches, hospitals, libraries, rivers and lakes, parks and much more. Compiled by MapInfo Australia from a variety of sources including PSMA Australia, administrative data and their own field surveys, the Detailed Base Map also contains an accurate depiction of the national road network at the time of the 2001 Census.

Call 1800 813 939 for more information.

Statistical Local Area Maps

These maps show the boundaries of CDs contained within a given SLA. The name and the code of the SLA are included, along with the codes of the CDs. Some topographic detail is included, such as major roads, rivers and other significant features. For each SLA, there is a single overview map showing the whole SLA. For some SLAs, there are also additional sheets showing enlargements of particular areas.

The majority of maps are printed on a single A3 page but a small number are printed on an A2 page. Some maps comprise more than one page.

Maps for all 37,209 CDs and 1,353 SLAs are available to order online at www.abs.gov.au/census. Just click on Census Maps. If you are ordering a large number of maps, it may be more cost effective to place your order through the ABS National Information and Referral Service. Contact 1300 135 070 or email client.services@abs.gov.au.

The entire set of SLA Maps is also available on CD-ROM, in Statistical Local Area Maps, ASGC 2001 Edition (cat. no. 2920.0.30.001). This product was provided free of charge to LEP-eligible libraries along with CLIB 2001, and is also available to purchase.

Using Census Data:
The Bureau of Rural Sciences and Country Matters

There is considerable variation in rural and regional Australia, from regional cities like Mt Isa (above) to very sparsely-populated remote areas

Many organisations turn to census data to provide necessary information for the development of government policy. No other statistical collection has the coverage of the Census of Population and Housing, making it ideal for examining the characteristics of small areas.

The Bureau of Rural Sciences is one such organisation that has made extensive use of census data to inform policy. Their recent publication, *Country Matters: a Social Atlas of Rural and Regional Australia* is a close analysis of data from the 2001 Census, focusing on the people and communities of regional Australia.

The Bureau of Rural Sciences is a scientific agency within the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. It provides advice to Government to support evidence-based policy development leading to more competitive and sustainable primary industry and stronger rural and regional communities.

Country Matters looks at the differences between people living in Metropolitan and non-Metropolitan areas. Non-metropolitan Australia has a higher proportion of older people, more Indigenous people, and fewer recent overseas migrants.

In recognition of the considerable variation in rural and regional Australia, from large regional cities to very sparsely-populated remote areas, *Country Matters* also consists of commentary and a number of thematic maps detailing the similarities and differences between areas. The publication uses the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE) regional classification for its regional analysis of census data.

The publication also makes use of SEIFA to examine the socio-economic status of regional areas, and uses 1996 Census data to analyse changes over time.

Country Matters: a Social Atlas of Rural and Regional Australia is published by the Bureau of Regional Sciences and is available to view or purchase on their web site, www.brs.gov.au .

Interested in More Information from the Census about Rural and Regional Areas?

You may also be interested in the Micro-dynamics of Change in Australian Agriculture (cat.no. 2055.0), published as part of the Australian Census Analytic Program. This publication examines data from the 2001 Census of Population and Housing alongside data from the 2001 Agricultural Census in order to look at farming communities in their fullest context.
The research explores the major occupational decisions of farmers, changes in the structure of the farming population and the social sustainability of farming communities.

Is Life Getting Better?

Measures of Australia's Progress (cat. no. 1370.0) is an ABS contribution to the national discussion about whether life in Australia is getting better. It includes a number of indicators that measure change within different aspects of life in Australia, allowing readers to form their own views of how our country is progressing.

The ABS measures aspects of Australia's progress through the multitude of statistics the ABS publishes relating to Australia's economy, society and environment. However, these traditional publications tend to focus on a particular subject in isolation. Measures of Australia's Progress draws on a range of ABS and other data that cut across traditional subject matter boundaries to assess Australia's social, economic and environmental progress.

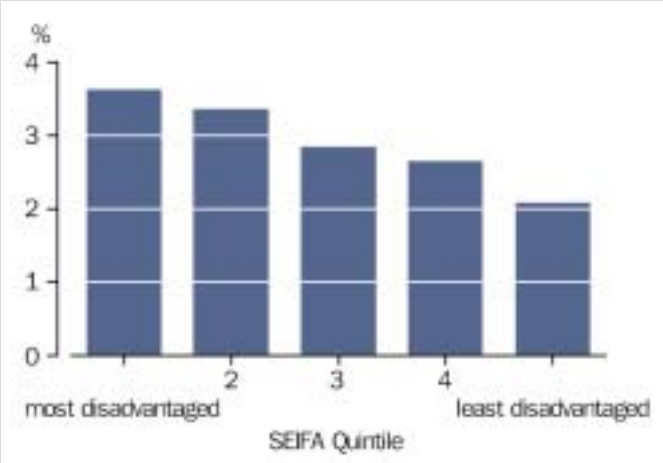
The publication is built around a series of headline indicators that provide a national summary of important areas of progress, and is presented in a style that is easily accessible to all Australians. Life expectancy at birth is used as a headline indicator of health, while progress in the human environment is measured by the number of days where air pollution in selected state capitals exceeded national environmental standards. Supplementary commentary provides more information about each of the areas of progress and the headline indicators.

Each aspect of progress is related, either directly or indirectly, to most of the others. Changes in one aspect of progress will be associated with complex interactions with other aspects – sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse.

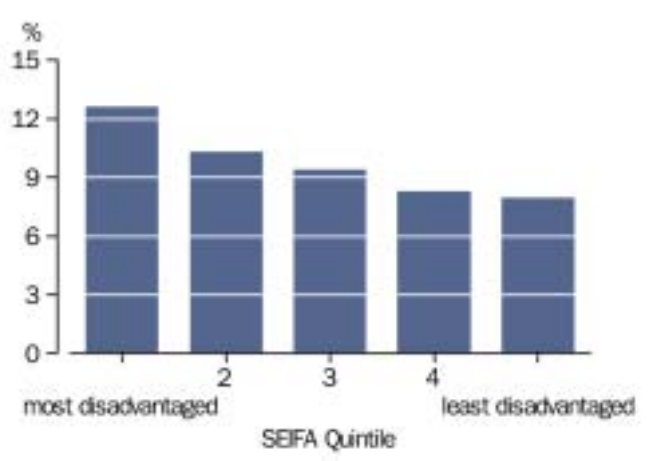
Measures of Australia's Progress includes three special articles that relate to, rather than measure progress. One such article provides information on the patterns and incidence of multiple disadvantage in Australia. The links between poor health and socio-economic disadvantage are illustrated by considering the different prevalence of health conditions in geographic areas that are grouped according to their level of disadvantage. Socio-Economic Indexes For Areas (SEIFA) summarise data from the Census of Population and Housing to provide measures of disadvantage and advantage for an area. To better understand the link between poor health and disadvantage, Measures of Australia's Progress explores the links between the SEIFA Index of Disadvantage and data from the 2001 National Health Survey.

This analysis provides a good example of the ability of SEIFA to be used in conjunction with other data to explore the interaction between socio-economic status and a range of outcomes.

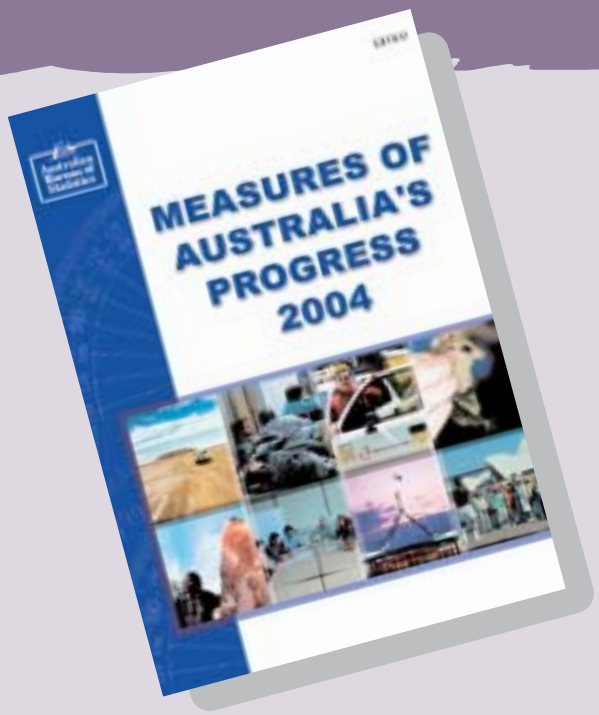
Diabetes and disadvantage



Mental and behavioural problems and disadvantage



Diabetes appears to be more common in more disadvantaged areas. After controlling for the effects of age, 3.6% of people had diabetes in the most disadvantaged areas, compared with 2.1% in the least disadvantaged. Mental and behavioural problems were also more prevalent in the more disadvantaged areas, with a rate of 12.6% in the most disadvantaged areas compared with 7.9% in the least.



Measures of Australia's Progress also includes some comparison of Australia with other countries. A special article compares indicators from the 30 members of the OECD across a range of areas of progress, such as GDP growth, tertiary educational attainment, and greenhouse gas emissions.

The ABS hopes that Measures of Australia's Progress will enhance discussion and inform and stimulate public debate about notions of progress.

Plans for the future

The next issue of Measures of Australia's Progress is planned for 2005. The ABS intends to build on this issue to improve the publication in the future, and invites feedback on ways of enhancing the publication. More details are available in Measures of Australia's Progress (cat. no. 1370.0), freely available on the ABS web site.

National Regional Profiles

People across Australia can now access the key social and economic statistics for their local region in the one location, following the release of National Regional Profiles.

National Regional Profiles contain a range of information about an area from both ABS and non-ABS sources.

People and organisations often need a comprehensive snapshot of their local region, and previously this was not easy to find. The Community Profile series from the 2001 Census provides extensive information about local areas, but can only report on information collected in the Census of Population and Housing – missing out on the vast amount of data collected by the ABS in other collections. In addition, a great deal of data is gathered by other Government Departments and other groups.

The National Regional Profiles bring together information on remoteness from the 2001 Census, the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) Index of Advantage/Disadvantage, Estimated Resident Population (ERP) counts, building approvals, and births and deaths. They also contain average individual taxable income from the Australian Taxation Office, regional unemployment estimates from the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), numbers of people on the various types of income support from the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCs), and even the sales of new motor vehicles from the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries.

National Regional Profiles are now available free of charge on the ABS web site

The availability of this broad range of data for regions such as Local Government Areas allows better informed decision-making, research and a higher level of discussion. By reducing the time spent searching for data from such disparate sources, National Regional Profiles allow users to spend more time analysing the data and developing policy.

It is planned that National Regional Profiles will be added to and expanded in the coming years. In early 2005, the profiles will be expanded to contain a five-year time series for each region, and the range of indicators will be extended and further developed over time.

The National Regional Profile for different Australian regions can be downloaded free from the ABS web site, www.abs.gov.au.

Did you know?

The Census Inquiry Service, set up to respond to the public's questions about the 2001 Census, took 615,000 calls between 28 July and 30 August 2001.

Fully ANZSIC

Intelligent Character Recognition (ICR) enables marks and handwritten text to be automatically deciphered and coded to the relevant classification

The census form contains a number of questions that gather information on a wide range of topics. During processing, responses on each topic are allocated to a particular category within the relevant classification. A classification provides a framework that allows the grouping together of similar responses. Classifications facilitate standardised collection, production, analysis and dissemination of statistics. The processing of census forms is largely concerned with ensuring that individual responses are allocated to the appropriate category within a classification.

During processing, paper forms are loaded and scanned into a computer. Intelligent Character Recognition (ICR) enables marks and handwritten text to be automatically deciphered and coded, enabling improved processing times and delivering a high standard of data quality.

Where available, the census makes use of existing Australian Standard Classifications. For example, based on their responses to the questions on Occupation, people are coded to categories based on the Australian Standard Classfication of Occupations (ASCO), while Country of Birth is coded to the Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC). Industry of Employment is coded according to ANZSIC, the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industry Classification.

The current edition of ANZSIC was released in 1993. It was produced jointly by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and New Zealand's official statistical agency, Statistics New Zealand. It is widely used in both countries for the production and analysis of industry statistics.

A review of ANZSIC 1993 is currently underway. It is important that the classification is periodically reviewed to ensure that it continues to reflect the current structure of the economy and continues to meet the needs of users. The forthcoming edition of ANZSIC will be released in 2006.

Results from the 2006 Census will be published based on the new ANZSIC classification. However, responses to the questions on Industry will be dual-coded, so census results will also be available on the basis of the previous classification. This will facilitate comparison with the 2001 Census.

For more information, consult your Census Dictionary (cat. no. 2901.0) or the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (cat. no. 1292.0), available from the ABS web site, www.abs.gov.au.

Did you know?

The area in Australia with the oldest population is the Tweed Heads Statistical Subdivision, with an average age of 46.

Did you know?

According to the 2001 Census, Males made up 86.7% of those employed in the Smash Repairing industry.

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census update

Census Update is a regular free production of the Census Section of the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

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Issue 33 July 2004
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Order Form

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Amount $_____

Receipt no:_____

By: _____

Cheque no:_____

Despatch: ____/____/____

By: _____

2001 Census Publications and Products Price List

Publications Available	Cat. No.	Cost $A	Qty	Total
Thematic Publications				
Population Characteristics, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians	4713.0	38.00		
Australia in Profile – A Regional Analysis	2032.0	48.00		
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